II

THE ATTAINMENT

IN the preceding lecture, I presented Horace as worthy of an invitation to that banquet of the elect to which George Meredith did not summon him. A complete mastery of the Spirit of Comedy is observable in the very earliest of Horace's work, the first volume of satires, or rather conversations, published in 35 B.C. I find it hard to view the years of Horace's young manhood, as an eminent Horatian puts it, as "a dark period in his mental history."[1] It was a period of combat for him, of loves and hates and rivalries, but one of victory. A mind formed as Horace's had been ever since his father walked with him to school, could hardly have looked on life through a glass blackly, or confusedly. Two things impress me about Horace's temperament, the more I study it. He was always a boy; and he was always mature. And yet the mind of Horace, though moulded thus early in the right form and capable of surveying life with the proper relish, had new scenes and new angles of observation. At the banquet of comedy his spirit acquired both a keener appetite and a more delicate taste.

A second book of satires along with the volume of *Epodes* was published five years after the first appeared. Horace's perceptions of comedy had developed notably, as we shall see, in that brief time. Moreover, an important event had occurred, the present to him by his patron, about the year 33 B.C., of a little Sabine Farm. Let us not fix either the

[1] C. L. Smith, *The Odes and Epodes of Horace,* 1903 [2], Boston, p. xxii.

date or the significance of the gift too precisely. Dates sometimes brighten and sometimes obscure the true history of an author's genius. The date 35 B.C. might mislead us, as it has misled some, into thinking that Horace's first interest was satire. When he began his literary career, so it is put, he found Virgil in possession of pastoral, Varius of epic, Pollio of tragedy, Fundanius of comedy, and other miners in the realms of gold working their well-staked claims. "Ah, there is Satire left!" he discovers. "Varro Atacinus has recently tried to revive Lucilius, but with little success. Let's see what I can do." Hence out comes a volume of *Sermones* as his first fruits, volume II following five years later, with a book of *Epodes* thrown in. How belittling to Horace is such a reading of his plans for poetry, I trust we have already seen.

In similar vein, it is easy to say that the Sabine Farm created Horace's lyric poetry. Satire is for the city; for lyric utterance, the poet needs communion with meadow, stream, and grove. Once settled among the Sabine hills, Horace warbled as naturally as the birds of his forests. Just the opposite is true. It was not the Sabine Farm that created Horace's odes, but Horace who created the Sabine Farm. It is a mistake to regard the *Satires* as the first of his productions and to see in the *Epodes* a gradual approach in lyric feeling to the *Odes*.[1] Such a theory shivers on that very early poem, the Sixteenth Epode. Horace's youthful ideal, as I read him, was to set forth in Latin verse the richness of Archilochus. The art of the Sixteenth Epode presupposes, as we saw, a considerable training in lyric. I referred to the *Epodes* and the *Satires* of Horace as two different worlds. So they are, though tangent at some points, but they are not separated by barriers of time. They are simultaneous

[1] Teuffel, *Röm. Litteraturgeschichte*, §§ 236, 237.

aspects of a mind at harmony with itself and master of its different moods. They are related as work to play, the grave to the gay, the severe to the lively, though each never fails to color its prevailing tone with shadings of the other.

Play is a vital function of the mind, that, however, presupposes work. The effect of some of our educational theories today to turn work into play defeats its end. For all play and no work makes Jack a dull boy; the poor youngster has no chance to revel in revolt and educate himself after his own fashion. A man of learning, no less than a schoolboy, needs diversion, a relaxation of the tense mind; he finds it today, sometimes, in the reading of detective stories. Horace found it in turning from poetry to his genial talks, which he tells us are not poetry; and in fact he calls them play—*haec ego ludo* are his words in the finale of his first book of the *Satires*.[1]

But what of these new pastimes that Horace gave to the world in 30 B.C.? There are only eight of them, but into the brief compass much wisdom is packed, with an irony of yet greater delicacy than before, and of wider range. He first of all (II 1) replies to his critics again, some of whom had found him vindictive, some spineless, and some obvious. Finding it hard to correct these opposite vices all at once, he consults his lawyer, Trebatius, who gives him the wholesome advice, for which he doubtless expected a decent fee, to try giving up verse altogether. I am reminded of the suggestion made by the late Professor A. S. Hill, author of "Hill's Rhetoric," an indispensable book in the days before Rhetoric became a lost art, who told young Harvard writers in his famous course called English 5 that after wrestling

[1] I 10, 37. Stevenson urged that a writer should alternately work hard and play. See F. L. Lucas, *The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal*, Cambridge University Press, 1936, p. 141.

with the elements of a paragraph, adjusting its parts, adding a color here, transposing an epithet there, replacing long by short or short by long, they should try leaving the paragraph out. But Horace cannot sleep, he declares, without writing verse, and even Trebellius's prescription of swimming the Tiber or getting soundly intoxicated, or writing an epic on Caesar cannot prevent his resolve to emulate Lucilius in hitting human follies. If Lucilius seems to receive scant homage in the first book of *Satires*—for the reason that Horace wished to put the first wreath on his father's head—the old poet has his own meed here. Horace speaks with affection of his master who was a better man than he and whose whole life was depicted on his page as on a votive tablet. He lashed many enemies, yes. Indeed, says Horace, in one of the noblest tributes ever paid by poet to his peer, he was kind only to virtue and virtue's friends. "But young man," cries the lawyer, "you're running the danger of suits for libellous verse—*mala carmina.*" "But," retorts his client, with a clever turn of the legal phrase, "what if in Caesar's judgment the *carmina* should be *bona?*" "Oh, then," replies the wise man of the law, "the case will be quashed with a laugh and you will go free."

This poem, in a subtle fashion, is not only a fable for Horace's critics, but a dedication to Caesar, to whom, proudly confident of his support, he almost promises something in the heroic vein, when the right moment comes. In another poem acknowledgment to Maecenas for his timely gift is rendered in words that come from the heart (II 6).

> These were my day-dreams, then, a plot of land—
> Not very large—an ever-bubbling spring
> Hard by the house, a garden, and around
> A bit of forest. The propitious gods
> Have blest me yet more richly. It is well.

He describes those "nights and feasts of gods" at which the talk was of the real concerns of life.

> Whether mankind is blest
> By wealth or virtue, whether we make friends
> From sense of right or our own interest,
> And what may be the nature of the good
> And what its highest end.

The Sabine Farm, thus far, meant to Horace plain living and high thinking, with nature for a constant companion.

Despite the half-promise in the introductory satire to imitate as before the outspokenness of Lucilius, there is far less personal invective in the second volume of *Sermones* than in the first.[1] Instead, the dramatic element is greatly increased and characters are employed to set forth the precepts that the poet himself professes. Thus the farmer Ofellus (II 2), an old neighbor of Horace's in his Apulian birthplace, discourses on the pleasures of the simple life, not from a comfortable arm-chair before the fire, but out of the stress of adversity, for Ofellus is now a tenant on the farm he once had owned. His reverses led him to ponder on the meaning of wealth, as some of our rich men learned to ponder in the late depression. Ofellus talks like a communist in declaring that no natural law makes one an owner of the soil, but instead of proposing a fresh distribution for the benefit of those who have not, he looks calmly, amid gentle laughter from the Comic Spirit, on the present landlord, his master, who, thanks to his incompetence, or his innocence of the tricks of law, or the longer life of his heir, will not remain owner forever.

> So then live bravely on. Pit a brave heart
> Against life's hardships.

[1] Twenty-four contemporaries appear in the first book, but only four in the second. See Fairclough in his edition and translation of the *Satires* and *Epistles* (Loeb Classics, 1926), p. xx.

There is depth in this satire, and a lighter laughter elsewhere in the description of a parvenu's dinner (II 8) that anticipates the banquet of Trimalchio in Petronius, and in a discourse on the art of good dining, *ars edendi,* pronounced by an eminent gourmet (II 4) and heard with an ironic reverence by Horace. Another culprit of the times, the legacy hunter, is presented not as a villain but as a comic character (II 5) in a mock-heroic piece, in which Ulysses, learning from the prophet Tiresias in the world below that he is destined to poverty, is instructed in the art of landing legacies.

The two pieces remaining are, ostensibly, satires on Stoicism, continuing the vein of the third satire of Book I which led, as we saw, to Horace's genial art of criticizing friends. He now examines two more of the Stoic paradoxes, which appealed to his humor as they had appealed to Cicero's,[1] but whereas Cicero merely plays about the patent absurdities with his sparkling wit, Horace, applying his new device of ironic self-ridicule, leaves us not quite sure of who is hit or who is hitting.

Only the wise are free. This is the Stoic maxim brought forcibly to Horace's attention by his slave Davus (II 7). Horace is in the city for the Christmas holidays, or *Saturnalia,* when jollity reigned at the brief return of Saturn's Golden Age and all were free and equal. Slaves had the run of the house and were served by their masters at table. The world was at play, which, as I indicated a few moments ago, is in danger of becoming a lost art with us. No wonder that Davus takes advantage of the season to request a heart-to-heart talk with his master. He opens abruptly with a moral sermon on inconsistency in virtue like that of Priscus, who lived at Rome a libertine and a philoso-

[1] Notably in the *Pro Murena.*

pher at Athens. Better than this is steadiness in vice, like that of the gambler who when gout so stiffened his fingers that he couldn't pick up the dice to put them in the box, hired somebody to perform this necessary function for him.

"What's all this rot about—*quorsum haec tam putida tendant?*" cries Horace. As with Christmas presents, so with moral advice (especially if offered as a Christmas present), it is often more blessed to give than to receive, above all when the arrival of a saucy slave interrupts your reading of a book or your setting of sly satire into neat verse. "Why, you're the point," replies Davus, "Priscus is you, who praise the good old days that you wouldn't dream of living in if some god gave you the chance; you who at Rome want to escape to the country and in the country want to escape to Rome. If nobody invites you out, you write a sonnet on a dinner of herbs, but if Maecenas summons you to fill in at the eleventh hour, you turn the house upside down. 'Bring a light, bring a light!' and away you dash. Now don't scowl at me. I'm preaching sound Stoic doctrine, which I learned from Crispinus's concierge. You and I are slaves, you are caught by somebody else's wife and Davus by a little woman of the town. What matters it whether you're detected and flogged or crammed into a clothes-basket and escape? You'll be up to your tricks again presently." This is a most unpleasant Christmas message for Horace, after the lesson laid down in the second satire of Book I. "I'm no adulterer," he cries. "Of course not," answers the slave, "nor I a thief when I discreetly pass by your silver ware. But remove the danger and man reverts to nature every time."

Davus showers his master with other scraps from the sermons of Crispinus until Horace can stand no more. He looks round angrily for a stone. "The man's either crazy or he is in a fit of verse," says the slave. "Off with you,"

cries the master, "or I'll add you to the gang at the Sabine farm." That was where the convert of Crispinus, used to city life, would hardly want to go.

The light of comedy plays elusively about this little dialogue. On whom are its rays directed? It is a satire on the Stoics, whose diatribes Horace imitates, only to hoist them with their own petard. Yes, but this is not real Stoic doctrine, but only what Davus had absorbed at third remove from the concierge of Crispinus, himself but a street-preacher, a most lowly scion of the lineage of Zeno. This, then, is a satire on ignorant egoists who tell us half-truths half-understood. Partly. And yet Davus and the concierge have listened well and Crispinus has uttered not a principle that Zeno would not commend. Nor Horace, either. Davus repeats the burden of that reputedly coarse satire of Book I in language even coarser—the language of a slave, we will admit, whose tongue wags freely in the *Saturnalia.* Of course Horace was not the hero of that satire. He was but laughing at the third person in terms of the first. *De te fabula narratur,* he said to the culprit, as Davus now to *him.* For it is the thought of sin as well as the act that counts; there but for the grace of God go I. Is there a bit of self-examination and confession here, of the kind that Horace had learned to practise from his boyhood? There is. The sermon of the slave is sane and purging. This is a serious satire. It becomes very serious if subjected to the scalpel, in the fashion that I have applied it. Its humor takes wings. But forget what I have said, though all of that is true, and the humor still is there, radiant, mocking, elusive.

One word on the form of the satire. It is comedy not only in spirit but in form. It is a mime,[1] a street-mime, if you will,

[1] The element of the mime has also been noticed in *Epodes* V and XVII. See Duff, *op. cit.,* p. 73.

but one worthy of Terence. Davus is Terence's Davus, and the phrases are often Terentian. The verse could readily be changed from conversational hexameters to conversational iambics. Read them as iambics, for the fun of it, and you can often get half or two-thirds through a verse, and then reshape the rest.[1]

Whether this satire, with its many subtleties and its perfect form is Horace's masterpiece in comedy or that to which we now turn (II 3), it were hard to say.

Here we have another Stoic sermon at Christmas time. Horace has escaped to his farm with a box of books, to read and dream and plan his next satire. In comes a boor, another recently converted Stoic, Damasippus, and, big with his new doctrine, treats the poet to a sermon. A modern parallel could be found in the plight of a professor, who at last has a quiet morning in the examination-period to devote to his *magnum opus,* when a former friend, now turned book-agent, is ushered in.

What books had Horace brought along? Plato, Menander, Eupolis, Archilochus; Eupolis for the vigorous old comedy, Menander, Terence's master, for the subtle new comedy, Archilochus, of course, and Plato. Some say that this must be Plato the comedian, that Horace might have a specimen of the Middle Comedy as well as the Old and the New, but apart from the fact that the designation "Middle Comedy" may not have been known to Horace,[2] I hope at least that Plato, the philosopher, another of those intimates

[1] 1: Iamdudum ausculto et cupiens tibi dicere servus (Iamdudum ausculto et cupiens servus dicere); 21: Non dices hodie quorsum haec tam putida tendant? (Non dices hodie quorsum haec tendant putida?); 28: Romae rus optas; absentem rusticus urbem / Tollis ad astra levis (Romae rus optas; urbem absentem rusticus / Ad astra tollis); 34: Nemon oleum fert ocius? ecquis / Audit? (Nemon oleum feret ocius? Ecquis audiet?)

[2] Its first appearance occurs in writers after the time of Hadrian, though the term may be earlier than that. See *Christ. Griech. Literaturgesch.* § 216.

of the Comic Spirit whom Meredith might have welcomed among his elect,[1] had a share in training our poet to observe the comedy of life. Socratic irony, at all events, as transmitted by Plato is a part of his mental make-up. Possibly his habit of applying to himself the foibles at which he laughs may have been inspired by, if not directly derived from, the sage who thought that the oracle of Delphi had declared him the wisest of men because he was the only man who knew that he knew nothing.[2]

But I am interrupting the sermon of Damasippus. He had been a dealer in antiques, a renowned connoisseur, but a depression came, he lost his all, and was about to end life's woes by plunging off the Fabrician bridge into the Tiber, when a wandering philosopher, Stertinius, whose name "The Snorer" suggests that his talk was in his sleep, won him back to life by the comforting doctrine that, though the world considered him fool, everybody else was in the same category. This is the famous Stoic maxim: πᾶς ἄφρων μαίνεται "every fool is a madman too." As Stertinius declares,

> This formula embraces nations, mighty kings,
> And everybody—save the Stoic sage.

Damasippus may be mad for buying up dilapidated statues. But are Damasippus's creditors quite sane? Certainly the world was crazy for Damasippus, for his creditors constituted his world. The argument convinces him that life is worth living after all.

The Stoic warms to his theme. A little crowd gathers, a

[1] See W. C. Greene, "The Spirit of Comedy in Plato," *Harv. Stud. in Class. Phil.*, XXXI (1920), 63-123.

[2] On the influence of the Greek ethical treatises known as *Socraticue chartae* on the thought of Horace and Lucilius see Fiske, *op. cit.*, p. 104, and Duff., *op. cit.*, p. 28. I think, however, that if Horace is referring to Plato the philosopher, it is not only for his "ethical thought," and that there were other motives for putting Archilochus among his books besides his rôle as "iambic satirist."

crowd of fools, each listening raptly to be told what kind of fool he is. This is a moroanalysis, a most subtle kind of psychoanalysis. The preacher divides his auditors into four classes: seekers of wealth, seekers of power, seekers of pleasure, and victims of superstition.

The avaricious need the largest dose of hellebore—in fact all Anticyra should be allotted them. Hellebore was the ancient cure for insanity, and that grown in Anticyra was very good. In a word, money is the root of all evil. Take the miser Staberius, who had the amount of his possessions inscribed on his tomb-stone. "Here lies Staberius, worth ten billion dollars." He clutches them in the grave. Even Molière's miser had not thought of that.

Then take those whose palates are tickled with the thirst for glory. Take the great Agamemnon. Was he not mad in offering his daughter to be sacrificed at Aulis like a dumb lamb, sprinkling her head with meal? Suppose a man should put a lamb in a baby-carriage as though it were his daughter, all dressed and bejewelled, with maids in attendance, and call her Rosy or Posy and plan a marriage with some gallant spouse, would he not be immediately examined by a psychiatrist? Well how much saner is it to turn the tables and offer up your daughter like a lamb for sacrifice?

Consider now spendthrifts and debauchees, such as the son of Aesopus, who pulled a pearl from his sweetheart's ear and steeping it in vinegar swallowed $50,000 at a gulp. Whose madness, indeed, is like that of the lover? Horace turns to his admired Terence and turns into hexameters (as we thought of turning his hexameters into Terence's iambics) the passage in the *Eunuchus* where the slave warns his master that he can no more make sense out of the twists and turns of love than if he tried to go mad sensibly.

One class of the crazy remains, the superstitious, like the

aged freedman who after fasting and ablution would run to all the cross-road shrines and pray for immortality—"For me! Just me, just me!" One such illustration is enough.

The sermon is done, and Horace wants to know in what class of fools he is to be set. He thinks he is exempted from all these categories. But listen! He's aping greater men, like the frog that tried to swell into an ox's size. And he writes verses, a clear mark of insanity, and then his awful temper, and his thousand passions for lasses and for lads. "Come, come, Damasippus!" he replies. "Thou bigger fool, please spare the smaller."

This Satire is Horace's masterpiece, unless for its art that title should go to the little comedy with Davus. Here we have a longer and more elaborate affair, with less dramatic structure, since Damasippus goes on at such length. We forget him after a time and think that Horace is delivering the sermon. Well, is he not? He serves the Stoics in the same style as before, laughing at their auctioneering the while he steals their wares. But the end justifies the means. The Stoic paradox has been so transmuted that the original possessors would not recognize it as theirs. What was matter for gentle derision to the Comic Spirit now becomes part of his own merriment. The trick is simply done. What was before a skyscraping monument of egoism topples to the ground, when the Stoic sage himself finds his own place amid the crowd of madmen. "Thou bigger fool, pray spare the smaller." For Horace is there too. Though less conspicuously, he, in Thackeray's phrase, wears the same long-eared livery as the objects of his laughter. All Horace's laughter is directed at folly, the folly that seriously takes itself for vice, the folly that seriously takes itself for virtue.[1]

[1] Meredith remarks that the Comic Spirit "is only hostile to the priestly element when that by baleful swelling transcends and overlaps the bounds of its office."

We have had little scenes before, with various protagonists, but the theme is universalized now. The world itself is a stage, as for Shakespeare, and as for Shakespeare, it is a stage of fools.

One feature of Horace's art is displayed abundantly in this satire. His deftness at side-thrusts has often been noted, his use of an incidental fool to illustrate a general folly. Illumined but an instant by a ray of comedy, the fool fades quickly away, but while the light is on him, he is uncomfortable enough and unforgettable. Allied to this trait is the presentation of little pictures which, while illustrating their point, are in themselves so pleasant and so striking that we remember them for themselves, quite apart from the truth that they exemplify. They stand out of the context in a kind of relief, like Homer's similes, while the images that they raise before the reader are as vivid as those in Dante. How can one forget the lethargic patient punching his doctor; the drunken actor sleeping through the part of a sleeping heroine; the philosopher with his paper tail; the unmusical collector of pianos (or their ancient equivalent); the lunatic miser guarding his heap of corn with a long pole and drinking sour wine out of a ladle; the lunatic old gentleman with a long beard who builds toy-houses, harnesses mice to a little cart, and rides a hobby-horse; the jubilant heir, like the one in Ben Jonson's *Volpone,* prancing about coffers and keys; the lamb in the baby carriage; the two brothers, somewhat like the two brothers in *Tom Jones,* the one gambling with his jackstones, the other hiding his solemnly in holes; the fond lover snapping apple-seeds at the ceiling to find out whether his love is requited; and the fanatical freedman troubling deaf heaven at the cross-road shrines to make him, just him, immortal. A gallery of portraits such as these are better demonstration of the mad world than all

the Stoics' syllogisms. We may all find our likeness there without much difficulty, and through folly recover sanity, if personally conducted by Horace or Shakespeare, or Molière.

But we turn again from Horace's play, his *lusus,* to the high seriousness of his lyric poetry. Three volumes of Odes appeared in 23 B.C., ten years after he was given the Sabine Farm. Then and before, he had experimented with other forms of lyric verse besides those of Archilochus. In particular, he had achieved the art of translating into Roman music, as he well declared, the Aeolian measures of Sappho and Alcaeus. The poet's thought had also deepened. He had come round only step by step to Octavian's policies, though ever enjoying his friendship, but now he appears as his spokesman and the prophet of the Roman Empire five years or more before the *Aeneid* was given to the world. In six stately poems at the beginning of the third book of the *Odes* he proclaims ideals for Rome that could keep the greatness of any state imperishable—simplicity of living, soldierly discipline, fidelity to the national heritage, government tempered with intelligence and the spirit of poetry, self-sacrifice for country, moral vigor and morality's prop, religion. Horace, though wise in all the philosophies, loves the humble and a humble faith, and knows that the gods welcome the country-woman's offering, a wreath of rosemary and myrtle frail, more than a costly victim.

Such are the deeper tones in Horace's odes. He is also, as before, deeply moved by nature, the sights and sounds of the country in which his new abode was placed. We can visit the farm today, restore in imagination his modest villa, look as he looked at the encompassing hills, and watch the same mountain-stream wind down its way to the river. With these beauties all about him, he sang of nature with a fresh delight that moved Wordsworth to exclaim:

> Give me the humblest note of those sad strains
> Drawn forth by pressure of his gilded chains,
> As a chance sun-beam from his memory fell
> Upon the Sabine farm he loved so well;
> Or when the prattle of Bandusia's spring
> Haunted his ear—he only listening.

We need take out no pocket-handkerchiefs at Horace's sad strains, nor felt he any pressure of gilded chains. The lacrimosity is all Wordsworth's, but we are none the less grateful for this tribute from our modern priest of nature to the truth of Horace's vision of meadow, stream, and grove.

But this is not Horace's greatest achievement in these lyrics. It is rather a triumph of the imagination, the creation of a little golden world in which he ensconced himself and which we can enter if we read his odes aright. In them he sings of wine with a gay temperance; he sings of love, most comfortably—fondly looking forward or fondly looking back, horrified at his brute rival's triumph, grateful for his own escape, and now, in a flash, revealing that pure wedded love that parts the lovers only with their dying day. Horace speaks without prejudice here, for he remained to the end a jolly bachelor.

It is a world, moreover, of romance. Meredith declared that there is no quarrel between the Comic Spirit and romance, provided that the romantic soul does not surrender itself to its emotions and wallow in sentimentality. In Horace's peculiar variety of romance, moreover, the Comic Spirit has unusually free swing, for it assists in the creation of romance. I shall veer away deftly from that tempting mirage, or morass, a definition of Classicism and Romanticism. Even after the brilliant book of Mr. F. L. Lucas the difference has not been completely demonstrated. And who would want a demonstration? Romance, like the Spirit of

Comedy is elusive. Even if we catch our fish it was more of a fish when swimming in the water. I will assume merely, I think with Mr. Lucas's approval, that the romantic spirit likes among other things to wander to strange and mystic realms, untrod by other foot, in quest of rare adventures. Horace feels this call of the wild and the marvellous as he had felt it in the Sixteenth Epode,[1] only that now he has learned to travel without leaving the Sabine Farm. He invites wonders to come to him. Possibly with Virgil's pastoral Arcadia in mind,[2] he re-creates his little domain into a fairy-land and by inviting the gods to share his pleasures and to rescue him in the hour of need gives the place a mythical distinction. This is that mythologizing of his own experience that we have noted before, which he exalts into a mode of contemplating the beauty of nature about him.[3] In the pleasure of these creations, and in the little mock-heroics at his own expense, into which the element of parody enters, the Comic Spirit is his constant partner. It is the shimmering light of the Comic Spirit that has been for me the special charm of Horace's odes for over forty years. It were useless to point out all its colors, for it fades if we apply the microscope, nor could I catch them all, for each new reading of the *Odes* finds it shining in new corners.[4]

[1] L. 41: Nos manet Oceanus circumvagus; arva beata / Petamus, arva divites et insulas. For another mood of wandering, see *Odes* III, 25, 8; Non secus in iugis / Exsomnis stupet Euhias / . . . ut mihi devio / Ripas et vacuum nemus / mirari lubet.

[2] The seventeenth ode of Book I is a pastoral in Alcaics.

[3] See E. K. Rand. *A Walk to Horace's Farm,* Boston. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1930, pp. 4-6.

[4] Mr. Lucas (*op. cit.* pp. 66 ff.) does not include Horace among the Romans in whom he finds traces of romance. But Horace can kick over propriety—*recepto / dulce mihi furere est amico* (II 7, 27); he can yield to the gentle madness of poetry—*amabilis insania* (III 4, 5); and he can release taut sensibility in a day-dream (III 4, 9 ff., the story of how the doves covered him, a babe in the woods, with leaves). These are moods, not habits with Horace, but they are real while they last, and his own peculiar blend of romanticism with the comic spirit is a rare and refreshing note in poetry.

After publishing his three books of odes in 23 B.C. Horace resigned, ostensibly, from poetry. The work of his mellow old age was to be devoted to philosophy—not metaphysics, but a comfortable contemplation of life—and to a review of the art of poetry that he had been practising. So Cicero turned to philosophy and his own art of the orator when his retirement came. For his new aim Horace chose a new literary form, the epistle. It suits his years. He is now one of the older boys. He likes to talk to a group of the younger ones, or to just one. They can answer back at times; there are dramatic elements in the *Epistles* as in the *Sermones*. But Horace does most of the talking, one feels, because the others want to hear him talk.

A volume of these new *Letters*—twenty of them, all short—appeared in 20 or 19 B.C., evidently before the death of Virgil. He had written more odes, doubtless, after his first volume had appeared, particularly one full of a merry banter at the expense of his best of friends (IV 12). Two outer events turned him to lyric again. One was the celebration, in 17 B.C., of the Sæcular Games, the ceremonies that rounded out an age, or *saeculum,* in which the diapason ended full in Augustus. For one of the rites, Horace, an unofficial poet laureate, was asked to write a Sæcular Hymn, which, sung by a chorus of youths and maidens, perfectly fulfils its liturgical intention. Then again, the military triumphs of Augustus's step-sons, Tiberius and Drusus, over the Alpine tribes elicited a fourth book of odes, published about 13 B.C. Shortly after that he published a second book of *Epistles*. Those of the first are tiny letters, in which Horace has distilled the essence of his principles of life. Those in the second are much longer; in them are gathered his views on the poet's art and the meaning of his country's poetry. The famous *Ars Poetica* may be an earlier work,

perhaps much earlier, but even so it is reasonable to suppose that Horace touched it up a bit and put it at the end of his final volume.

There is nothing very novel in the ideas set forth in the philosophy that for our poet sums up life. It is the same Horace who talks, from the same armchair, but each morning is new and so are the smiles on his face. His wisdom has constantly mellowed. He who once threw mud at Canidia and then as the priest of the Muses preached to boys and girls, now talks with young poets at the club. It were vain to discover a deepening Stoic seriousness in his reflections on life. He views both Stoicism and Epicureanism in the light of the Comic Spirit. But his lessening vigor has not made him a cynic, with the faint bitterness—*amari aliquid*—of Anatole France. A cynic is one who takes himself seriously but not his world. An Horatian is one who takes his world seriously but not himself.

Three traits are conspicuous in the *Epistles,* as of course in all that Horace had written, his independence, his spirit of banter, and his modernity.

Independence is the keynote to that simple philosophy he proclaims in the prefatory letter. Since this was very possibly the last to be written, as prefaces often are, it gives us not only an introduction to what follows, but a summary of it. He does not subscribe to any one philosophical system:

> I swear no loyalty to any sage.
> (Nullius addictus iurare in verba magistri.)

He builds his own philosophy just as he had virtually done from the start. Horace, therefore, like Cicero, who is his master in many ways, has been called by a horrid title, an "eclectic." I prefer to say that they both are independent.

This independence applies not only to thought but to life. Our philosopher is independent of pleasure, desire, and fear,

and anger, which he calls a brief attack of insanity—*ira brevis furor est.*[1] "Anger is not much less foolish than disdain," are Meredith's less pungent words. Horace is independent of wealth. He calls ironically to the big business men of his day:

> O cives, cives, quaerenda pecunia primum est,
> Virtus post nummos.

"Friends, Romans, and countrymen, seek ye first the almighty dollar! Be philanthropic when you've made your pile." Not such a bad doctrine after all if we read *virtus cum nummis,* and think of the magnificent donation to the pleasure and improvement of us all made by Mr. Mellon, and wonder whether such philanthropy will be possible if rugged individualism and the struggle for success go by the board in some new economic Golden Age.

Horace had described often enough the true nature of wealth and of poverty. In one of his pertinent epigrams in the *Odes*[2] he has pictured the multimillionaire sitting "poor amidst great wealth" (*magnas inter opes inops*), but nowhere has he put in such a pleasant light of comedy the abundant life of the poor man,[3] who can change his attics, his beds, his baths and his barbers, and "in his hired dory get just as seasick as Dives who sails a private yacht."

Horace is independent even of Maecenas, his mighty patron and great friend; for in one of the letters[4] he refuses at his request sent on a day in September to come down from the hills to Rome.

> Rome is too big for me, and I too small
> For Rome.

[1] *Ep.* I 2, 62.
[2] III 16, 28.
[3] *Ep.* I 1, 91.
[4] *Ep.* 1 7.

His real reason, as Maecenas understood well enough, was that September is a most uncomfortable month in Rome, when the deadening *scirocco* blows, everybody is nervous, and even horses, so a physician of that city once told me, shy fretfully at objects in the road. But Horace's refusal is most courteously and humorously made, with the help of two stories, a fable, and an "olde ensaumple" from Homer. Maecenas could not possibly have taken offense. "Oh well, he *is* more comfortable there."

Perhaps Horace's best-known motto—or rather one of his hundred best-known mottoes—is *nil admirari,* though I am not sure that everybody, or perhaps anybody, can quite translate it. The easy way is to transliterate it, as Tennyson does:

> Not to desire and not to admire if a man could learn it were more
> Than to walk all day like the Sultan of old in a garden of spice.

Byron does not understand it, or pretends not to:[1]

> This strange saloon, much fitted for inspiring
> Marvel or praise; for both or none things win;
> And I must say, I ne'er could see the very
> Great happiness of the "Nil admirari."

Perhaps old Fielding, a great lover of Horace, hits the nail on the head, as he generally does, in citing,[2] "The famous *nil admirari* of Horace or in the English phrase, to stare at nothing." Horace has plenty of enthusiasm, wonder, and admiration for things, but he will not be a slave to them or any emotions. On the contrary, to call on another of his maxims, his endeavor is to make things his slaves and not himself the slave of things:

> et mihi res non me rebus subiungere conor.[3]

[1] *Don Juan* V 100.

[2] *Tom Jones,* Book VII, 1. Mr. Duff (*op. cit.,* p. 82) also has a happy phrase: "One should never lose one's head in excitement over anything."

[3] *Epist.* I 1. 19.

He is adopting a Stoic maxim, but as it passes through his temperament it suffers a sea-change into something rare, though not at all strange, but familiar and universal. I hesitate to add one more attempt at interpretation, but somewhat akin to this virtue is the quality dubbed in my part of the country "Harvard Indifference," which is not snobbishness or superiority, but independence. I never require my pupils to translate "Nil admirari" by "Harvard Indifference," but remark merely that "Harvard Indifference" cannot be understood by one who knows not Horace.

Banter, allied to Socratic irony, is a delicate game, which only the Comic Spirit can play. A slight curdling of the cream changes it to a serious irony, to derision, or to the kind of retort that scores a victory and ruffles feelings. Rather, it is mock-ridicule, which a friend well knows is the surest proof of intimacy. Horace had mastered this art early in life, as Virgil and Maecenas and Tibullus and the wag Arellius Fuscus and young men in love and young men writing poetry and the bailiff on his Sabine farm and doubtless many others were well aware.

And here we may recall a famous Epode (II) that I may seem to have neglected, in which Horace, setting forth with charm and apparent sincerity the joys of country life, suddenly reveals at the end that the rhapsody is that of a banker, who has sold his securities to invest in a farm—only to turn them into new loans at the end of the month. The connection in phrasing with Virgil's panegyric of the country in the second book of his *Georgics* is so close that we at least suspect that Horace had been reading that passage. Virgil was at work on the *Georgics,* according to his ancient biographer, for seven years, giving them to the world at just about the time that the *Epodes* appeared, 30 B.C. Horace, who may well have been given glimpses of the work before the pub-

lic knew it, matches his brother-poet's rhapsody in a spirit of banter—though not of parody or ridicule—in this pleasant poem. The selection of an Apulian or a Sabine woman for a model farmer's wife—that is, one from Horace's birthplace or from the neighborhood of his newly acquired farm in the hills—neatly lends to the illusion that the sentiments are his own, until the appearance of the banker. Yet even so, knowing Horace's subtleties may we not say after all *"de sese narrat fabulam"?* Horace does not like to be caught either in seriousness or in too direct a mockery.

The first book of *Epistles* has more of banter than any stretch of his poetry of like extent, but the opening letter of the second book is his masterpiece of banter, as it is also a monument of Horace's independence and of his modernity.

It is sent to the Emperor Augustus who had long been badgering Horace for a work dedicated solely to himself. The Emperor was deeply attached to the poet. He exchanged letters with him of an exceedingly intimate tone and offered him a place as his secretary; but Horace did not accept. Horace half promised, as we saw, to write an epic in the Emperor's honor, some day, but the idea of writing epic he soon gave up, if indeed he had seriously entertained it. Two noble odes[1] he perhaps thought tribute enough, together with the Sæcular Hymn and those poems of the Fourth Book that celebrate the campaign against the Alpine tribes planned by Augustus and carried out by his step-sons. Still, though they form the backbone of the book, the ode of dedication is to Horace's own Muse, with a lifting of the cap to the younger generation of poets, and, if I read it aright, to Ovid in particular. In one of the bantering letters of the First Book of the *Epistles,*[2] Vinius is commissioned

[1] I 2; 12.
[2] I 13.

to carry certain sealed rolls to the Emperor. They may have contained a special copy of the first volume of *Odes* for the Emperor, who in that case did not find quite what he wanted.

But the moment has now come for a good long poem in which the Emperor saw his name standing climactically at the end of the opening sentence. Horace expresses in that sentence an extreme reluctance to interrupt the reform of the age which Augustus is establishing; he is afraid that he is sinning against the public weal. The irony of this apology would appeal to Augustus after his persistent efforts to get an encomium out of the poet laureate. He could smile for a different reason when in the following lines he found himself placed among the heroes—Romulus, Castor and Pollux, Hercules—whose deeds on earth gained them in the hereafter the society of the blessed and immortal gods. Indeed Augustus has the even greater glory of being worshipped in his lifetime. That seems strong enough praise, yet come to think of it, Horace is merely putting into conversational hexameter what he had already presented to the Emperor in a most artistic ode.[1] Hasn't he anything new?

He had. He wonders that amid the general admiration for the triumphs of the hour, nobody notices what is being done in literature. People seem to think that the laws of the Twelve Tables are the last word in Roman poetry. He of course recognizes the merits of the old poets, such as Livius Andronicus, whom his old master Orbilius, "birchen Orbilius" as he calls him, used to flog into him at school, but one ought to be as keen to their failings. We ought to take a lesson from the versatile and ever-modern Greeks, who were constantly inventing new things in poetry, and appreciating the inventions. Of course this is a frightfully cultured age. Everybody is a poet. No preparation is needed

[1] *Carm.* III 3. 9–16.

for this art. Sea-captains, physicians, and carpenters have somewhat studied the crafts that they profess, but

> Learn'd and unlearn'd we all can scribble verse.
> (Scribimus indocti doctique poemata passim).

Yet the mild madness (*levis insania*) of the poet has some good points. He is an innocent soul, honest, averse to filthy lucre, not much of a soldier but doing his bit for the State by celebrating noble deeds (that is precisely the function of the poet that Augustus was anxious to see performed). Or he writes a suppliant hymn to the healing gods, sung by a chorus of youths and maidens. This part of the epistle has a tinge of autobiography.

There follows a brief history (though very long, Augustus must have found it) of Roman poetry, beginning in a leisurely manner with the primitive farces that accompanied peasants' holidays. But there came a day when captive Greece conquered its rude capturer—

> Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit—

and literary imitation was started on its lengthy course. The art was not always well applied, as in the case of the slip-shod Plautus. Ah me, what is our contemporary stage coming to, Augustus? It gives us nothing but elaborate scenery. All intellectual enjoyment has vanished. Pleasure has passed from the ears to the eyes. If Democritus, the laughing philosopher, were alive, he would be vastly amused, not at the play but at the spectators, who applaud the costumes before they hear a line. The playwrights tell their story to a deaf ass.

Nor are the prospects brighter for written verse. We poets have our failings, I'll admit. We present our latest work to you when you are troubled or tired (more irony); we are sensitive to criticism; we call back verses already re-

cited though we are not called back (Horace has just given an example by fishing up his ancient eulogy of Augustus); and we are always hoping for a generous stipend from a patron. Still, there are some fine examples of patronly munificence. Take Alexander the Great who established Apelles the painter and Lysippus the sculptor as his only royal artists. Virgil and Varius, your Majesty, have performed the same service for you; for the poet, you know, no less than the worker in bronze, can set forth in his verse the minds and characters of heroes. (Augustus was somewhat aware of that fact.)

Of course that's not for me, although I should ever so much like to make my pedestrian little *conversazioni* tell of

> Heroic deeds and mighty lands afar,
> River and citadels on towering hills,
> Barbaric realms and wars to order brought
> Under thy sway, and Janus' temple shut
> While Parthia bows to thee and awesome Rome—[1]

but unfortunately, I can not do all that I wish. Yet Horace's momentary burst of epic is not so bad. For Augustus these romantic strains, spiced with irony, were whetting his appetite in vain. But you would not want me to do a *caricature* of you, would you? Horace asks. The unseemly portrait would be carried with the poet's parchment to a shop where incense and perfumes and pepper are sold and anything that waste paper wraps.

"Waste paper" are the last words of the poem, a monument of independence and of banter and of modernity. In answer to Augustus's demand for some magnificent encomium from his poet, Horace has replied, in two hundred and seventy verses, "No, Sire!" The court poet has presented his monarch with a handful of waste paper.

[1] *Epist.* II 1, 250.

Between the year 13 B.C., when the second book of *Epistles* was published, and Horace's death, five years intervened. He died in 8 B.C., in the same year with his own Maecenas, as he had prophesied, and they were buried not far apart on the Esquiline. I somehow hope that during those last five years, Horace wrote nothing, but enjoyed the life of contemplation and of "talks," feasting on that Spirit of Comedy which he had instilled into books and into men.